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APPLICATION FOR U.S. LETTERS PATENT

Title:

BUTTON HAVING STIFFER VERTICAL MOTION
AND REDUCED LATERAL MOTION

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BUTTON HAVING STIFFER VERTICAL MOTION AND REDUCED LATERAL MOTION

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0001] The invention relates in general to buttons, and in specific to a button that has a stiffer vertical motion and reduced lateral motion.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] A button set is an interface between a user and an electrical switch. For example, a user would push a desired button of the button set, which would then engage the electric switch. FIGURE 1 depicts a prior art example of a button set 10 which comprises a plurality of buttons 11. FIGURE 1 depicts a bottom view of the button set 10. In other words, the portion that the user would push is underneath button 11 and is not shown. Each button includes two runners 14 that connect the button 11 to the header or frame 15. Each button also includes a button post 12 that engages an electric switch (not shown) and a stop post 13 that stops the downward movement of the button 11. The button 11 moves until the stop post 13 engages the surface of the PC Board on which the switch is mounted (not shown). This prevents damage to the button and/or the electric switch.

[0003] The button set 10 of FIGURE 1 typically has a 'cheap' feel. The button set has too much registration (clearance or slop) that the user has to move the button through until the electric switch is engaged. This may occur when the user contacts a portion of the button that is not co-linear with the button post. Thus, the bottom demonstrates a lot of unproductive movement—movement that is not depressing the electrical switch. Some of this unproductive movement is lateral, instead of vertical. This lateral movement may cause misalignment of the button post 12 and the electric switch, such that activation may not occur or activation may require more button travel. Moreover, the buttons typically have 'dead spots', or portions that when pushed or depressed, do not activate the electric switch. These factors diminish the value of the product and contribute to the cheap button feel.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0004] One embodiment of the invention is a button for engaging an electrical switch comprising: a button post that transmits a vertical motion of the button to the electrical switch, an alignment post that registers against the electrical switch and reduces lateral motion

of the button, and at least one runner that connects the button to a frame and includes reinforcement that stiffens the vertical motion of the button.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0005] FIGURE 1 depicts a prior art example of a button set which comprises a plurality of buttons.

[0006] FIGURE 2 depicts an example of an embodiment of the invention.

[0007] FIGURE 3 is another view of the example of FIGURE 2.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0008] Embodiments of the invention preferably comprise a reinforcement member that is located on the runners which stiffens the button movement. This causes the button to move uniformly when depressed, and prevents the button from rocking if the button is depressed on a side away from the center of the button. Embodiments of the invention further comprise an alignment post that registers against an electric switch. This reduces lateral movement of the button when the button is depressed, and reduces or eliminates dead spots on the button.

[0009] FIGURE 2 depicts an example of an embodiment of the invention. Button set 20 comprises a plurality of buttons 21. FIGURE 2 depicts a bottom view of the button set 20. In other words, the portion that the user would push is underneath button 21 and is not shown. Each button preferably includes two runners 24 that connect the button 21 to the header or frame 25. Each button also preferably includes button post 22 that engages an electric switch (not shown). Each button also preferably includes stop post 23 that stops the downward movement of the button 21. The button 21 would move until the stop post 23 engages another surface, e.g. the PC Board. This prevents damage to the button and/or the electric switch.

[0010] Button set 20 also preferably comprises a reinforcement member 26 for each button 21, that is located on the runners which stiffens the button movement. The reinforcement member 26 causes the button to move uniformly when depressed. This prevents the button from wobbling or rocking, i.e., one side moving down and the other side moving up or not moving down, if the button is depressed on a side away from the center of the button. The reinforcement member acts to distribute the downward motion from the depression of the

button to both runners. Thus, no matter where (or how) the button is depressed, the button moves uniformly.

[0011] Note that FIGURE 2 depicts two runners being connected to the button, however more runners may be used. The reinforcement member would distribute the downward motion to each of the runners. In FIGURE 2 the reinforcement member is shown as a rectangular panel having two structural ribs located on the diagonals of the panel. However, this is by way of example only, as other types of reinforcement members could be used. For example, the reinforcement may comprise two ridges arranged in a plus sign (+), connecting the midpoints of the sides of a rectangular panel. It is preferable to have the reinforcement member molded along with the runners. However, the reinforcement member may be attached (e.g. glued or welded) to the runners.

[0012] Button set 20 also preferably comprises an alignment post for each button and electrical switch 27. The alignment post 27 registers against the electric switch that is engaged by the button 21 or 31. The alignment post 27 reduces lateral movement of the button when the button 21 or 31 is depressed, and reduces or eliminates dead spots on the button. Reducing the lateral movement of the button reduces the slop in the button.

[0013] FIGURE 3 depicts another view 30 of the button set 20 of FIGURE 2. In this view, the alignment post 27 is registering against a side of the electric switch 32. Upon depressing button 31, the button post 22 would engage the electric switch 32.

[0014] Note that it is preferable to have the embodiments of the invention include both the alignment post and the reinforced runner(s) to prevent or reduce the 'cheap feel' of the button set.

[0015] The button set may reside on an electronic device, e.g. a scanner, a camera, a printer, a copier, a facsimile machine, a computer, or any other electronic device.

[0016] Note that the embodiments of the invention has been described in terms of a button set that comprises a plurality of buttons. However, embodiments of the invention will operate with a single button. Further note that embodiment of the invention contemplate that one or more of the alignment post, the runners and the reinforcement are formed from plastic, however other materials may be used, e.g. a metal.